The Tower

Spring 1986

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* Designates Tower Award
** Honorable Mention

Jerri Buckingham

Metaphor

I have taught here
For years,
My methods
The same,
And my students
The same,
Except now and then
When some feisty young boy
Or lively-eyed miss
Takes true interest
In all this.
But Charlie is a
Problem,
His brains are no doubt,
But his mind wanders so
That he can't figure out
The most simple of problems
The smallest of facts.
"Charlie," I said,
"Boy, do you like school?"
"I love the soup, sir,
I just can't stand spoons."
Came his answer,
So wide-eyed, yet solemn,
As if those few words
Held some pious decision.
"You're always the same,
Boy, you answer in riddles."
I shook my head sadly,
Continued my lecture
As Charlie dreamed onward;
I tried to ignore
His polite metaphor.

Rebellion

I hear they used to roast
Dean Martin-
How's that for violence on TV-
And Edgar Allen Poe
Made evil
  Far more real to me
Than Motley Crue or
MTV.
Yet the moral-minded
Debutantes
Insist these things
Are the problem.
"Oh, things are so bad!"
They say,
"Oh, it wasn't this way
In our day!"
No,
You burned blacks,
Hunted Indians,
Allowed our government
To be bent to the will
of the chosen elite
In a perversion
of democratic intent.
A society in moral decay?
Or reflections of the same
By a different name.

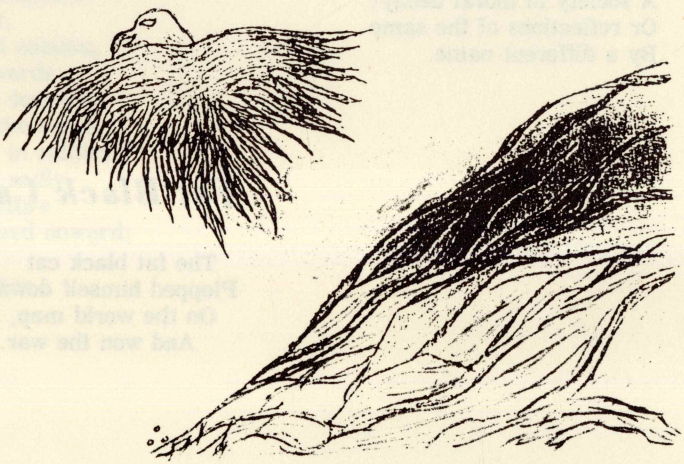
Fat Black Cat

The fat black cat
Plopped himself down
On the world map,
  And won the war.

Keith Watson

Nightingale Nightmare

Flipping, Flapping,
Failing, Falling;
Leafless, Lifeless
Chasm Calling:
Hell is for the Birds.



Terri Wilbanks

Genelle Powell

Sunrise

Out of the dark night
Comes a bright colored light.
Shades of red, purple, and orange,
Clothe the sky with its glory.
A sight too beautiful for the mind to manage,
In such a short time.
Reappearing the next day. . .
. . . Or in the depths of the mind.

Barbara Delker

To Be Or Not To Be

I had to swim to class,
The cat used my coat for a litter box,
I lost my jacket,
And I can't find my checkbook.
My umbrella kept my books dry
But what about me?
The weekend went by at a run,
So fast I got nothing done.
Other than that:

It's raining,
And,
It's Monday.

But at least it's warm outside.
And the rain smells fresh,
Making a beautiful rhythm of its own,
As it patters down over window panes
And cobbled lanes, splattering all around.

Perhaps I will give this week a try.

Mike Keeney

Marcia Mechler

Wino In The Park

Drunk
More on liquor than inspiration
Groping
For lost ideas
Making yourself the new creation:

A writer without a pen.

Taken

Caught again
By the Great Saturday Night Swindle;
Fugitive princess in a cardboard castle
Victimized by the conceit
That something big was bound to happen
Every Saturday night
(Or every Friday at the very least),
Anticipating, she sits,
Looks at the T.V., glances at the telephone
And wonders--what the hell,
Maybe next week, whatever it is
Will be.

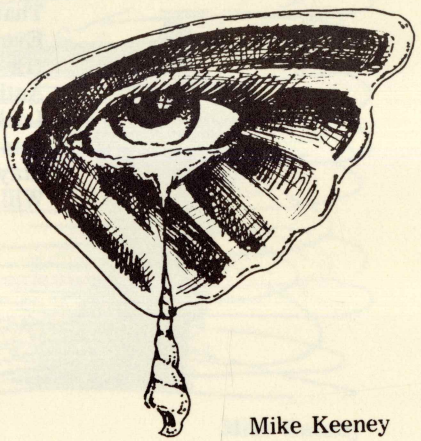
Marcia Mechler

One Summer Night

You say the music's left you
The stuff of which or why or how
Poems are made.
And you, being a poet, are left with nothing more
To write.
Well, well...join the club
I have no music either;
Only a pen and a pad and a blanket
That keeps me warm at night.
And tonight, it is enough
To sit by the fire, wrapped in reality
Nestled in my lover's arms
Grateful for the moonlight and the warmth,
Content in the knowledge that
Winter is for lovers:
And on some summer night
When nothing's left to write about
Maybe the music will come again.

A Day At The Beach

Salty memories
Spill from my eyes
Tumbling down
To rest in the sand;
In the distance,
The sun fades---
I walk away
Before it reaches me.
Pastel colors of purple and red
Filter through the palm trees
On the eastern shore...
There are no shells worth saving
This time.



Mike Keeney

Jacquie Wee

No Vacancy

There's a certain mindlessness about
these July days,
these hazy lazy days of
maniacal tourists.
Warm and drowsy, this drifting
sensation of self-induced
vacation washes over Hampton Beach,
creating that all too familiar
desperate-for-fun feeling.
In 50 degree waters these deprived Northerners
frolic in vagabond abandon--
I feel a little Southern sympathy.

Then the rains burst, scattering
the slumbering crowds, breaking
them up with the supernaturality
of a good thunderstorm.
But tourists are infallible-- they
stay, immune to all forces,
(natural or otherwise)
ready to take on either the world
or more beer.
For the working individual, tourists
represent a loathsome necessity;
dare we bite the hand that feeds?

Mopeds, skateboards and bare skin
overrun the sidewalks, guaranteeing
the hesitant that Summer's really here,
and that at least for a few months
one can be a legal vagrant on
the streets of this quaint little town,
bursting at the seams
with a cosmopolitan explosion.

Hampton Beach, I liked you better
in May, when I could walk on your sands
alone, and watch the seagulls make
postcard perfect swoops over sapphire and silver
waves; when I could sit in undisturbed
silence and stare into your timeless being,
eternally spellbound.
But now,
these wild days of July have
ravaged your beauty, feet by the thousands
rape your sands--
commercialism has smeared
your aura.

Jacquie Wee

Contemporary What?

I am not a celebration.
Lie, cheat, steal
love it all, love it all
Backstab, stab back
stay on top.
Eat your vegetables, go to school
What is it all about, Alfie?
Your guitar falls in love
and you're still confused.
One way
or another, another, another
they're gonna find you--
stretch you up, string you out,
siphon you.

No, it isn't easy being green, psychedelic
and all that jazz.
Knock on my door
I'll see if I'm in, okay?
Round and round and round
we go; the roses are dead
the cedar tree is dead
the car is dead.

What's your number?
I'll give you a call.
Bullshit, baby. Who cares?
The ring around the bathtub
will be back--
So will the sweat of warriors,
workers and fat businessmen.

You say I do
I say you do
Let's call this whole thing
off the wall
Boil me a meal in
a plastic bag; suffocate me
with modern efficiency.
Master minding the play
we're all pretty good, but
the trick is to be better.
Right, Boss?

Look at the squirrel: it
knows exactly where it
goes-- what happened to me?
The Divine Plan, O God,
has caught me looking the other way--
unintentionally--
for what is intention anyway but
a mere muscle spasm.

I say, Walt, I've had enough
of this. Haven't you?
So let's walk away
drive away
fly away--
this preludes, includes, concludes
our broadcast for today.

Alison H Simpson

Crescent Moon

Silver crescent moon
Smiling down on Earth from the
Reaches of the sky.

Ancient Visitor

Whisper weary wind
Tell me tales of travels from
The end of the Earth.

Eternity

Whirling dust motes in
The sunlight, like mankind's dance
In his universe.

Kendra Jones

Song For A Season

1.

It must have been summer because the sky
looked so heavy and the air so thick
that I thought at any moment it might drop
with a thud.
Sam tapped on my window early on Saturday mornings.
I put on my jeans and his baseball cleats.
We treaded through the swamp looking for snakes
that didn't scare me back then.
Us, the mosquitos, the gnats, and the frogs
played all day until time for dinner.

Blue liquid for pain
Blue stuff for plain
eyes, flaming blue eyelids,
red lips, roughed cheeks
like mosquito bites on my legs.
Sam with the guys playing baseball in the street.
I ran outside with my new face,
bare feet, dirty knees.
He let me play first base.

Sam told Susan Smith
who told Sally Green
who told me he wanted to kiss me.
I giggled.
Finally that night he gathered the courage
shoved at him from snickering friends
who dared him to
by the camelia bush
right on my mouth with his braces
as quick as I closed my flaming blue eyelids.

2.

It must have been autumn
because the moon was plump, orange;
the sky was dusty pink
and a living rainbow reached
out into the wind, rode
a magic broom for us
and I wanted to climb the big one by the library
that had tired crippled branches
but Sam said no because he wanted to spread
the quilt and drink the cheap sweet wine but I
ran away toward a living rainbow,
laughing; Sam said that if I fell
it wouldn't catch me. He
followed me up to the top
where I sat in the bend of a knotted elbow
and I told him that I loved them
but they didn't love me and he
tickled me with a twig until I laughed
again. The listening leaves applauded
except a few that fell to the ground
to sleep or get away from the crowd.

3.

It's the first day of April and it looks like rain
I think as I look across a green field, more green
and vibrant than I think I've ever seen it, so green
against the darkening clouds.
Rain, like sharp slivers of glass came down
and speared the town
into a smear of gray
the day.
Sam left.
"I think I'll name the baby Stormy."
Mama says that such a name
is befittin', for "Your Daddy's been stormin'
around here in a state of total humiliation
ever since that happened" (she points at my round belly)
"And the name is befittin' too
if she's anything like you
and if she is you do deserve it."
"Mama," I break in, "last night I dreamed
I slept under an angel's wing who dreamed
of earthly passion but was jailed by her wings,
jailed by her spine to Him, jailed
right down to her toes and waitin' for nothin'
And in my dream
Sam had the same handsome face
but it wasn't him, it was somebody else.
Blue eyes had changed to a cold gray glaze
that gave the imposter away.
My bedroom became a large green field.
I stood in the middle
safe from him.
But an old lame man
appeared behind me.
A black hat fell down over his eyes.
He chuckled and tapped his cane on the ground
and the green field turned to brown."
But Mama doesn't listen, "Just don't you name it Sam
'cause that boy done..."
I don't hear the rest of what Mama's gonna say
'cause I don't want to. The approachin' storm
looks more invitin', and I decide to take some miracle-gro
out to the flowers.
Rain beats the ones that grow by the house.
I decide that only the weeds could survive
until we think they're ugly and pull their life-force out.
But one flower does remain,
determined to withstand the hard rain.
It's like me, I think; if I die in child labor
I'll seep back into the ground, stretch
my root-like arms, stretch
my arms until they burst above ground,
until they stand as high above the ground
as rosebuds, so tall and regal,
just darin' somebody to pick 'em.
I think that I would like to pick
that long-stemmed flower,
hold it tight,
prick my fingers,
watch the blood drip down
this big blossomin' belly.

Kendra Jones

The Saleswoman Who Deals In Human Beings

There is no sense in taking two lives.
One is more than enough.
My pain is fresh, raw.
There is no warmth in my body,
no contrast against the cold bloodless metal
that seems to stretch for miles
underneath me.
My eyes are a pig's eyes
before the slaughter.
The doctor merely performs his duty.
He is part of the colorless fixtures,
a white ghost with black shoes.
Stark white, dirty floor, evil machine shove
their way into me,
raping me,
silently.

They keep me in the recovery room one hour,
an hour that becomes a forever.
A vicious-looking spider builds her nest
in the corner by the window.
Soon some unsuspecting victim will be sucked into the web
that seems to stretch right from
her desperate living womb--
her nourishment must be carried through.
Unlike me
no tiny creature's hands have held her body.
Unlike me
she has no soul to sell.

Jason Clabaugh

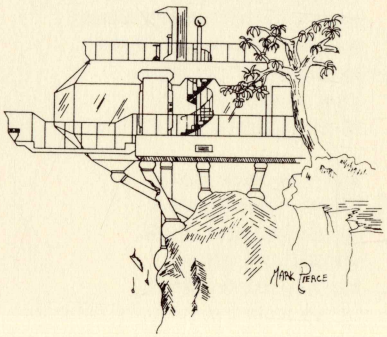
Kendra Jones

Spring Cleaning

We clean the sheets (hot water, regular cycle).
We paint the walls
and count the windows
and hang family photos down the hall.

Time ticks
to the click of our counting.

We line up all the shoes in the closet.
We wash the dog.
We unclog the sink
and tear down a wall.
We throw out my espadrilles,
his bell-bottomed jeans;
We have to make room for our large-screened t.v.
We rip down the curtains,
replace them with blinds;
We regulate sunlight--
that eases our minds.
We vacuum the volvo,
panel the playroom.
We keep fighting and fighting;
He (God forbid) wants aluminum siding.
We subtract an old radio
and add a new stereo.
We sell our piano
for a reasonable price.
No cows to count, but plenty of bills
we number until we have to take pills
for emotional pain.



Time ticks
to the click of our counting.

Sometimes we have nightmares
about a place
where modern conveniences cease to amaze,
where state-of-the-art in an unknown word,
where the hum of a dishwasher cannot be heard.
We open our eyes,
comforted by
the soft dim light of our digital clock.
We cling to each others'
matching one hundred percent cotton sleepware
while Time ticks
to the beat
of our breathing.

Ramona Smith

Infatuation

Daydreams in a multitude of color
My mind is miles away
As I gaze out the window thinking of you

A smile curls my lips
My eyes are covered with a misty glaze
Reality is pushed aside

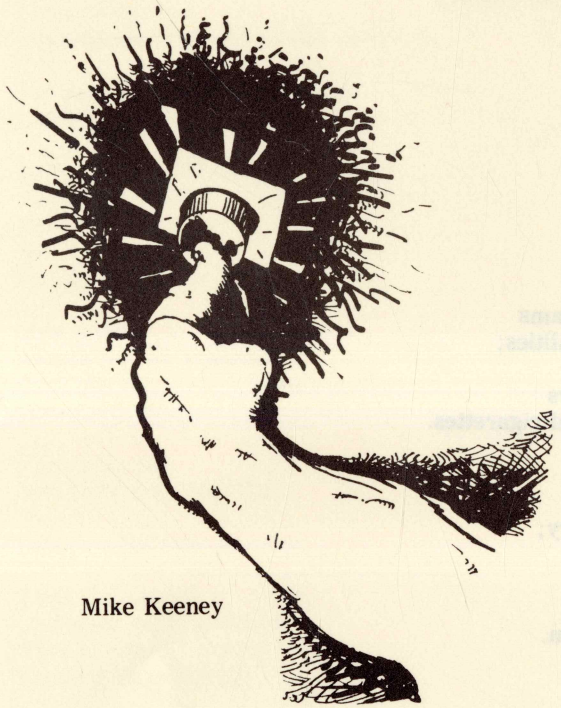
"What was that?" I ask,
My mind is thrust back into reality
As I hear the teacher's voice

I stumble through an answer
As snickers fill the room
And I fade back into my dream

Kirk Hardesty

Just A Button

One little button,
It's gotten bigger,
With agitation.
To touch it --
Exciting.
But to fool around,
You lose control:
A heaving world,
Overcome by a button.
Sweat, groan, and push the button;
Push the button.
A quaking, shaking, trembling world,
And no place to go.
Just a button
Push the button
Shake the world.



Mike Keeney

Danny Gamble

After Reading Whitman

Press close barebosomed night!
It's you and me alone together,
loose on the streets,
straining to find
what makes leisure tick.

There is no safe place
to pass the night.
Safety sleeps in closed eyes,
and mine are wide open.

Open to slick franchises
where tarnished brass and hanging plants
sell watered drinks
at twice the price;
where made-up glam queens
stare with X-ray eyes
through my hip pocket;
where discomaniacs sweat
on polished dance floors
exerting all energy
in a kinetic climax
of imagined lovemaking.

Open to rock-olas
where young punks
in leather and studs
thrash and slam
to two chord nothing
never noticing socialist dreams
turning into Republican realities;
where lost souls lean
against Dempsey Dumpsters
dumbly smoking hand-rolled cigarettes.

Open to jazz joints
where we cool;
where music is liquid poetry;
where we are the hepcats
who be-bop till dawn;
where Bird blows in
a never-ending celestial jam.

Open to public markets
where champagne mixes freely with orange juice;
where button-down boys talk trash;
where daddies' princesses
overflow summer dresses;
where everyone is on the make,
but no one makes anything;
where I drive a Porsche
and you drive a Jag;
where we sleep together
never asking names.

Press close magnetic nourishing night!
Together we search
for the last laughing jukebox.

Teri Wilbanks

Wasted Lives

Twist of hand--slight of fate--
The gamble pays off in rubble and ash
to crowded avenues of faces
voicesless--silent screams
meandering and running
from and toward nothing at all
Aristocrats refine the West.
The East takes tea,
The inmates behind the Mason-Dixon Line
And the third world bleeds again.
Strangers stranded in a strange land
insist upon being blind-
stuck within folds of blackness-
packaged in the velvet of the day-
scrawling from out of the pit of loneliness.
Our "freedom" deciphers its price
from tormented brains.
The gamble paid off in rubble and ash.

Dogma is talked
so we refuse to hear
and we concede,
in our intellectual mediocrity,
that there are no absolutes.
Running from that Light
Who knows no time
we bite the Hand
Who gives us life
The Only Truth
in a world of lies-
The Morning Star
that fires a cloudy sky
is belittled and called trite
by ones who wallow in rubble and ash.

Mari Drynan

I read about me in a book:
A hero, for all to admire.
I walked through the beautiful landscape
With all my belongings on my back.
I was timeless, in love with life.
I wandered around free,
And everybody liked me.

But when I closed the book
My hero was gone.

I read the book again
Searching for my soul
Trying to determine just what I want,
And wondering if I'd ever find it.

The cool breeze blew in my face
And the leaves crackled under my feet.
The birds showed me the way
And I spoke with the animals
Everyday.

Away from society
I was truly free.
Fighting the evil and saving the good.

But each time the book ended
I ended too.

So I turned to movies
To see for myself,
To make it real.
But it wasn't real,
And it wasn't me.

How could I do those things?
Search for the treasure,
Save the day,
Live with nature?

I am only me
And I don't do anything.

I don't even look like that.

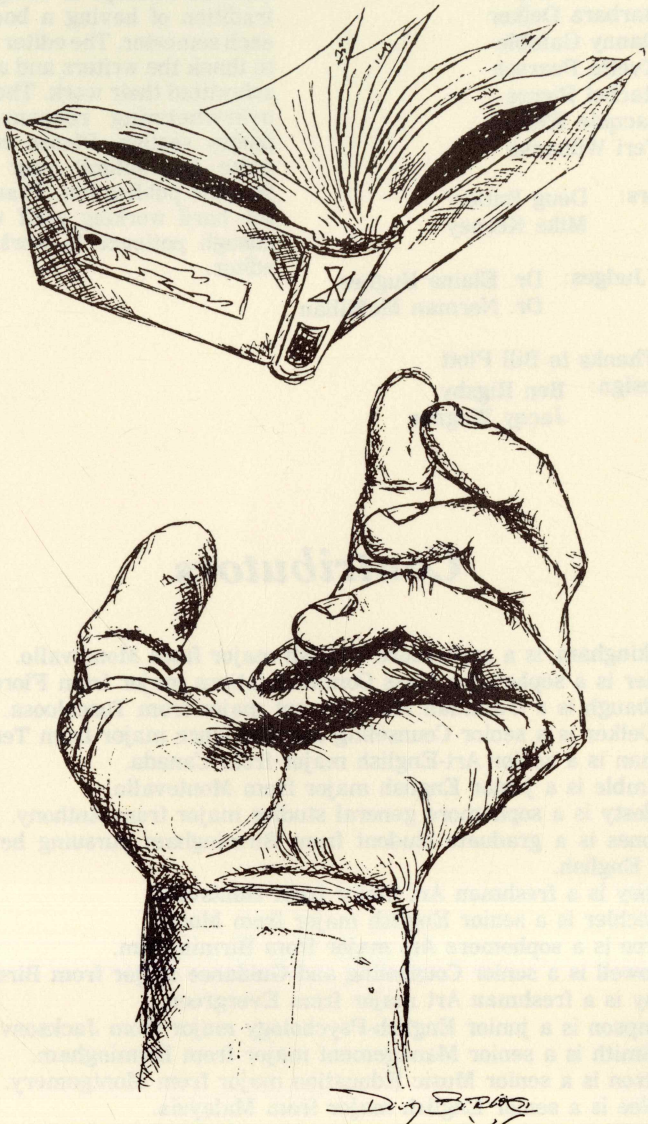
I left the movies
And went back to school.
That is where I belong-
Reading those books.

And I got my A's.
And my teachers smiled,
And my parents smiled,
And my friends smiled.
But I didn't,
Because I found out who I was.

It was not my hero,
It was someone else's.

So I rummaged through the clutter in my room,
Under the mementos of a young life leaving too fast,
And I searched through my stories again
And I read about me in a book,
Only to realise
I wasn't ever there
In the first place.

Mari Drynan



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The Tower is a student literary magazine put out by the students of the University of Montevallo. The Fall 1985 and Spring 1986 editions were an attempt to bring back the tradition of having a book printed each semester. The editor would like to thank the writers and artists who submitted their work. There was an overwhelming response in the poetry section. Please continue to write and submit your work for possible publication. Thanks also to the hard working staff which had enough patience to work with the editor.

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